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The educational revolution from Katsuji (print media) to Katsuei (visual media) : Mizuno Shinko and “The Film Education (Katsuei)”

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Question to be raised: “aspirational history of the media”

This study deals with the history of film education in Japan. There are possibilities and uncertainties in history that need to be addressed. It is often said that “There is no ‘if’ about history” but it is important to determine the turning point of history. As a matter-of-fact, schools of history in the United States are sometimes called “allohistory” or “counterfactual history.” These focus on what might be called the “What if.” What if Hitler had invaded England? What if Crown Prince Ferdinand had not been assassinated and World War I never occurred? We can learn lessons for the future from such speculations.

It is even more important to pay attention to “if” in history; in other words, “the future in history.” The description of history can be divided into the following two dimensions according to time: one is the view at that time and the other is the present view of looking back at the past. According to Shunsuke Tsurumi, a famous Japanese philosopher, this distinction can be defined as the “dimension of aspiration” and the “holistic dimension.”¹⁾ Aspirations are conceptions of what the future will be. It is the future with its possibilities and uncertainties that is obscured by “holistic history,” which offers a unity to the subject matter of beginnings and endings.

The term “aspirational history of the media” refers to the historical approach that I have employed because we always come into contact with new media by means of aspiration. For example, Carolyn Marvin made the following remark in her study, “When old technologies were new.” “Assuming that the story could only have concluded with ourselves, we have banished from collective memory the variety of options a previous age saw spread before it in the pursuit of its fondest dreams.”²⁾ In addition, aspiration not only has a dream but also formulates a policy to realize the aspiration. Policy is a conception that is needed in characterization of changing the future. With the rapid development of the information society, it is important to develop a policy for the future. Therefore, I have used the term “aspirational history of the media” from which we can learn lessons for the future.

Improving the position of cinema

Before turning to the future in history, I would like to introduce some information and explain keywords regarding film education in Japan. In 1928, the All-Japan Association of Film Education was organized with the support of the Osaka Mainichi newspaper. The Osaka

Mainichi newspaper, one of the largest and most influential dailies at that time, was also known as a pioneer in the field of educational movies for schools and social gatherings. Cinema, however, was regarded as low-class entertainment. In particular, teachers were against it perceiving cinema as the spread of an evil effect on the public, especially children. Thus, Mizuno Shinko, head of the Motion Picture Department of the newspaper, applied the term “Katsuei” to movies with an educational purpose. He intended to improve the perception of “cinema” (eiga), which was considered as low-class entertainment, by comparing it to “print” (Katsuji).

Although many studies have been conducted on film education, little is known about Mizuno. He was labeled “a fanatical nationalist looking like a sea goblin (Umibouzu).” In addition, Katsuei was never discussed in mainstream movie journals in Japan such as the “Movie Times” (Kinema-Junpou). The only person who sympathized with Mizuno was Ichikawa Sai, the publisher of “A Motion Picture Yearbook” (Eiga-Nenkan). Ichikawa was an idealistic man who attempted to improve the position of cinema by introducing the technique of statistics into the cinema world. He compared himself to Don Quixote and included Mizuno in “a revolutionary movement for movies” It follows from what has been said that, in the period of the transition from silent movies to talkies, such a group worked against the tendency of the film industry that regards movies as a means of entertainment and profit.

Educational revolution from Katsuji (print media) to Katsuei (visual media)

Let us now turn our attention to “the future in history.” “If cinema had been invented before printing” is Mizuno’s main point. He cherished an illusion that movies would supersede print culture. Mizuno pointed out that print culture had numerous defects. He said that it had produced many elite and stereotyped persons full of abstract notions that had nothing to do with real life.

When we discuss his assertion from “Katsuji” to “Katsuei,” two points need to be mentioned. The first point concerns the age of speed resulting from World War I. In 1929, an airship, the Zeppelin, traveled around the world in only twenty-two days. The cover of the first issue of the monthly magazine “The Film Education” was adopted in a movie “Wonder of the Universe (Science-Fiction).” In 1931, Mizuno also predicted an urban life that was kept at high speed by the police. He developed his idea that modern life needs the extreme sense of “Katsuei.” The second point concerns the change in knowledge. The diffusion of mass media lowered the position of the educated classes. Furthermore, the industrialization of movies meant a diversity of ways to obtain knowledge.

Considering these two points, I can say that the argument of Mizuno is not merely fantasy. As an example, Mizuno often compared newspapers and movies. Newspapers contained sections such as editorial columns, business, diplomacy, hobby, education, serial novels, essays, etc. He hoped that a movie theater could play a role similar to that of newspapers. In addition, Mizuno aimed to unite entertainment and education. His so-called “enter-education”

has become famous in Japan as a slogan proposed by Kodansha, a major magazine company. He said, “If cinema had been adapted as the basis of human culture, instead of printing, what a change there would have been!” It is thus clear that he inspired the then new wonder media—cinema—as the thing to come after print culture.

Katsuei represented a revolutionary movement for movies. The same was true in the educational world. Mizuno intended to foster an educational revolution from Katsuji to Katsuei. He intended to use text movies that could become a new system of didactics in classrooms. Furthermore, he proposed distributing traveling films all over the country. The movies that were specially selected for educational purposes were shown in elementary school halls once a month. But film education in primary schools attracted not only children but also parents and neighbors. We must not forget that Mizuno perceived cinema as the most effective reformer of social life.

Publishing his “film-thesis”: “Defend Manchukuo and Mongolia”

We shall now consider movie products more carefully. The Manchurian Incident occurred in 1931. People all over Japan went to theaters specializing in newsreels. Mizuno produced the silent movie, “Defend Manchukuo and Mongolia” in November 1932. He declared that it was the first attempt to present a thesis to the public through a movie.

This “film-thesis” was a unique montage movie based on the thesis written by a journalist and it included drama, documentary segments, and line drawings. One movie critic admired this movie because it not only offered a quick news report but also made the why, what, and how of the news easy to understand. On the other hand, Iyokichi Kondo, the director of the movie, strove to capture and maintain the interest of the audience by utilizing a rapid tempo. The most fascinating aspect of the film was that it was entertaining as well as educative. This ideal type of film-thesis aroused general admiration. When Mizuno went to Manchuria in 1932, he showed this movie to Puyi, the “Last Emperor.” Mizuno increasingly relied on movies and finally produced a silent movie, “Education by Means of Movies” with twenty-six segments. For example, one segment was titled “Cinema is the Most Eloquent Form of Esperanto,” and another was titled “A Short History of Japanese Laws on the Control of Cinema.” In a summer school in 1932, Mizuno screened this movie instead of giving a speech.

Production of the “film-thesis”—“Japan in Time of Crisis (1933)”

The year 1933 was a special year for Katsuei. The title of the magazine was revised from “The Film Education” to “Katsuei.” Then, the Osaka Mainichi newspaper produced a talkie, “Japan in Time of Crisis.” This was a type of a lecture movie in which General Araki Sadao persuaded people to be prepared for conditions “in time of crisis.”

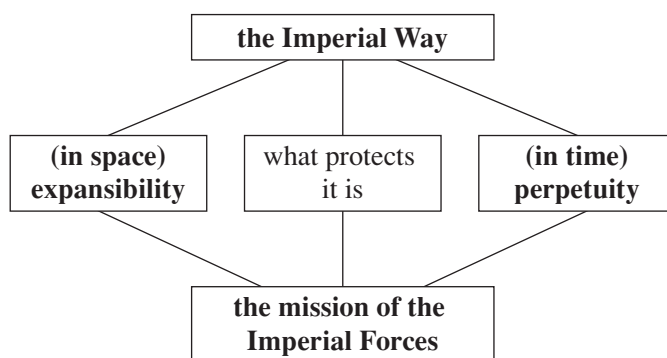
It was also an important movie from the historical viewpoint because it was later used as evidence against General Araki Sadao in the Tokyo War Crimes Trials. In 1947, Mizuno Shinko appeared in court and testified the following three objectives for making “Japan in

Time of Crisis”: (1) educational objective, (2) commercial objective, and (3) political objective. With regard to education, Mizuno said, “We also took into consideration the idea of producing a motion picture reflecting what might be treated in treatises or essays or addresses, no matter how difficult.” He went on to say, “Our second objective was to show that a cultural movie of this type would also sell in the motion picture market.”³⁾ The point is that this movie also had the aim of realizing “enter-education.”

The third objective of this movie was explained using a chart outlining the structure of the Imperial Way policy, which was shown by way of illustration in the movie (figure 1). Masao Maruyama, a famous Japanese scholar, later discovered that this chart agreed entirely with his theory of ultra-nationalism. According to his theory, “the extension of the axis of ordinates (time factor) represents at the same time an enlargement of the circle itself (space factor).”⁴⁾

Nevertheless, this lecture movie earned a bad reputation and was screened only in the west of Japan. It failed due to the following three reasons. The first reason was its length of one hour and forty minutes. The second was the period out of crisis. The third was its monotonousness. It is noteworthy that even the segment with Araki Sadao, the Minister of War, was not screened. Although many studies have been conducted on the movie as propaganda, the issue of its market-economy competition remains a matter for debate.

[figure 1] the Imperial Way



The twilight years of Katsuei

In late 1933, internal problems occurred in the Tokyo-Osaka Mainichi newspaper. Mizuno had no choice but to quit his job. After that, the term Katsuei was never used in the movie history of Japan.

Although some movie critics discussed film education, Mizuno was the only person who dreamed that movie (Katsuei) would completely supersede print culture. The same may be said on turning our eyes to the world. In the “International Review of Educational Cinematography”, Mizuno was introduced to the world as follows. “Mr. Mizuno is even bolder. He not only wants to assure cinema a sound and well-balanced position but also wants by means of its use to eliminate as far as possible the use, or abuse of the printed page

from human life.”⁵⁾ Although many countries promoted film education movement, Mizuno occupied a unique position. It is no exaggeration to say that Mizuno was a “film extravaganza.”

After he quit his job, he completely abandoned film education and embraced a religious life. He moved from the film medium to a spiritual medium. His educational revolution by means of movies also resulted in education by means of the invisible spirit. He established a training hall in Tokyo, and practiced the so-called “Tamakura Way” (Tamakura-no-miti). Although it is difficult to explain, it is a type of scientific way to control vital and rhythmical waves.

Conclusion: “back to the future”

Mizuno intended a revolution both of cinema and education. He aimed to unite entertainment and education (enter-education). Furthermore, by relating movies to knowledge and culture, he proposed an educational revolution from print media (Katsuji) to visual media (Katsuei). There was, however, “deadlock” (aporia) in the educational revolution; that is, the intention of realizing “enter-education” often failed. Movies became too moralistic. In addition, movies are easily influenced by market-economy competition. Of course, this type of competition is based on the response of an audience. Finally, film education is influenced by the quality of the movie product. “Aporia” is then unavoidable.

We are now ready to consider “aspirational history of the media” again. The aspirations for the new media were infinitely fertile, even if there was deadlock or even if Mizuno embraced a religious life. The approach of “aspirational history of the media” included another history of the movies. The knowledge from this study, the possibility of movies as a medium of cultural enrichment, has to consider the future of cinema as a whole. Generally speaking, history is a dialogue between the past and the future. E. H. Carr has said in the famous “What is history?” as follows. “Good historians, I suspect, whether they think about it or not, have the future in their bones. Besides the question why, the historian also asks the question whither.”⁶⁾

For example, how did the film medium continue or transform into the TV medium in the post-war period? Furthermore, we must not ignore the fact that Katsuei culture has to be reconstructed. Of course, it does not mean “from Katsuji to Katsuei,” but “both print media (Katsuji) and visual media (Katsuei).” How can reading culture be connected to the audiovisual culture? These questions need further research.

The famous movie, “Back to the Future” is adapted from the “Odyssey” by Homer (Homeros). In the “Odyssey,” we are told that “The only one who sees what is in front and what is behind.” That is, in ancient Greek, the past and present were “in front”; therefore, it was the only one they could see. The future was behind; therefore, they could not see it. This is the awareness of time, the so-called “Back to the Future” and the past (history) is the only track from which one can see the future. Therefore, the importance of “aspirational history of the media” cannot be overemphasized. For the future, using the future in history, let us look back to the future.

- 1) Shunsuke Tsurumi(1997=2008) *Aspiration and Holistic*, Asahi bunko, p359,534. Robert Redfield (1960) *The little Community*, University of Chicago Press,pp106-7.
- 2) Carolyn Marvin (1988)*When Old Technologies Were New*, Oxford University Press,p154.
- 3) *The Tokyo war crimes trial*, annotated, compiled and edited by R. John Pritchard and Sonia Magbanua Zaide(1981), Garland Publishing Inc, volume8, 18, pp619-622.
- 4) Masao Maruyama(1963) *Thought and behavior in modern Japanese politics*, Oxford University Press, pp21-22.
- 5) EIGA-ROMBUN “FILM-THESIS(1933) *International Review of Educational Cinematography*, January, pp62-63.
- 6) E.H.Carr (1961=1962(2008)) *What is history ?* London, Macmillan, p102.